**HOW TO ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**The 4 basic aims of every interview:**

1). Do you understand the job?

2). Can you do the job?

3). Will you do the job?

4). Do you pose a risk?

**Are you overqualified for this job?**

* DO; help them feel better about hiring you. Show them that the job really is for you, you’re not going to be bored, and you will get job satisfaction from being there. Think about the question behind the question. Be honest with them; if the job is effectively a demotion, but it’s more suited to your career goals – say that.
* DON’T; get frustrated by this question. If you are an older individual, or someone that is overqualified on paper – they are not trying to anger you. They don’t want to hire someone who will move on when offered more money and they don’t want to make a mistake.
* E.g. *“The truth is, I may be overqualified for this job. But it’s the perfect job for me because of ... x, y, z (state why the job suits you).”*

**Give me an example of a time your work was criticised. How did you handle it?**

* DO; show them that you can use criticism constructively. Give an example of a time someone told you how to improve a process, how you adopted this criticism and what results there were.
* DON’T; get defensive and scared by this question. They are not trying to set you up for failure. They are looking for evidence that you are open to criticism and will use it to progress your career.
* NB: Use the STAR technique; Situation, Task, Action and Result. What was the situation with which you were faced? What task was in front of you? What was your action? What happened – what were the results of the action?

**Describe a time when you had a heavy workload. How did you handle it?**

* DO; go into **detail** about a time you handled a heavy workload, walk them through it! They want to know that you can adapt to more stressful situations, show them the processes you used to handle the situation. – STAR Technique.
* DON’T; ramble on about how you once worked a 80 hour week. The question is not about how many hours or how ‘hard’ you can work. The question is about how **smart** you can work – taking them through your thought process.
* E.g. *“Everyone gets overwhelmed with their workload sometimes. What I’ve found works best for me is taking a step back, looking at what I have to do, and prioritising the tasks (give a short story here about a time you did this).”*

**What do you prefer, working on your own, or in a team?**

* DO; understand the typical working conditions of the job you’re applying for – research into the job role is essential here. If the position will require more autonomous work, with little work within a team – use this as your focus, but also support it with some benefits to working within a team.
* DON’T; be negative about either working style. Completely writing off one of the working styles is not the thing to do here. They want you to give an answer, but they don’t want you to demonstrate any negativity to the other. A perfect balance is difficult, but can be done.
* E.g. *“I like the creativity and feel of working within a team. But at the right times, I also feel that working on my own gives me a greater sense of responsibility and the chance to manage my own personal project”.*
* NB – don’t be afraid to ask them a question first; *“what kind of working style is normally encouraged in this company?”* – this could help you and give you further insight.

**Give an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond?**

* DO; have an answer prepared for this. It’s a perfect opportunity to make you look like the perfect candidate. Try to describe a previous example that has a direct link to the potential tasks you’ll be doing in the proposed position. This is the time to brag!
* DON’T; miss the opportunity to demonstrate how you go above and beyond.
* E.g. *“This was the situation we were faced with, we need x done – I did these things, and these were the results”.* ­­– STAR Technique.

**Have you ever been part of a team, or leading a team, where somebody wasn’t pulling their weight? How did you tackle the issue?**

* DO; make sure your responses are as positive as they can be. Tell the interviewer how focussed you were, and the actions you took to get the job done. Now is a time to use the STAR technique.
* DON’T; use this as an opportunity to complain and moan about a time someone wasn’t pulling their own weight, that’s not what the interviewer wants to hear. They don’t want to know that you told your supervisor straight away, this is not a time to show how quickly you can ‘tell’ on and bad mouth your former colleagues.
* E.g. *“I completed the task I was set with, and saw that my colleague was struggling. I offered my assistance, because I knew the team success was dependant on it. We worked well together and successfully completed the issue as a team.”*

**Have you ever experienced difficulty working with a manager?**

* DO; show them how it was the situation that was difficult, not the clash of personalities (this reflect negatively on you). What steps did you take to resolve it? – STAR Technique.
* DON’T; use this as a chance to bad mouth your previous boss. Nobody wants to listen to you talk negatively about a previous employer. Don’t mention how your boss accused you of being lazy and not putting in the effort, or how you weren’t one of his ‘favourites’ in the office – these type of things will reflect negatively on you.
* E.g. *“Initially when I started in my last job, I didn’t get off to the best start with my manager, as we both had different expectations about the role. However, I quickly sought to resolve this issue, we had a meeting and both laid out our expectation. The relationship and working environment improved instantly from there.”*

**How would your specific skill set help us generate revenue and maintain growth?**

* DO; make sure you know everything about the role you are applying for. Try and name at least 3 ways in which you plan to benefit the company and generate revenue. If you think your job isn’t necessarily a ‘higher level’ position, focus on the importance of your position in the scheme of the whole organisation.
* DON’T; just ramble on about how you ‘would like to generate more money’. The whole point here is about **how** your skills would generate more money. Everyone would like to boost revenue and increase growth, the importance is to show how your skills can help that.
* E.g. *“I would implement three simple strategies to your organisation, these would target x and y (previously researched aspects), reducing overall cost and helping to generate revenue.”* – use the STAR technique for what you would do.

**Tell me, where does this role sit in your overall career path?**

* DO; show them that you’re a very driven, motivated individual. Show the interviewer why you’re interested in this specific job – where can you see yourself in this organisation in three years time? What would you like to be doing? Let the interviewer see that you’re not just driven by a paycheck.
* DON’T; be wishy washy and give a non detailed answer. If you attempt to answer the question, do so properly. The interviewer doesn’t want someone who is just going to spend the next 5 years going with the flow, they want proof that you’re motivated to do a great job for them.
* E.g. *“I want to add value to this position, whilst developing my own personal skills. I plan to develop my roles, progressing within the organisation and gaining more responsibility.”*

**How long before we notice your contribution to the company?**

* **This** is the ideal question. If you have prepared a time-scaled plan, this is your time to shine and show them you are the **ONE.**
* DO; have a plan prepared for this. This is your time to demonstrate to the interviewer that you have a strategic plan for what you will do in your first 3 months (for example), and how you will make the step from new employee, to fully fledged member of the team. Walk them through your plan, giving them detailed explanation about your plan for success.
* DON’T; go in underprepared for this kind of question. In this instance, nothing is worse than ‘umm and ahhing’. They don’t want to hear about what you might do in the upcoming months – they want to know how, how long and what benefit you will bring.
* E.g. *“I’m glad that you asked that question, as I’ve put a lot of thought into a plan that I’d like to get started as soon as possible...”*

**How would you feel about working for someone who seems to know less than you?**

* DO; show them that you understand there are people who will know more than you. If you’re someone over-50, don’t take this as an insult. They want you to demonstrate that, although you may not 100% enjoy being managed by someone who’s younger/seemingly less experienced than you, you’ll do so because it’s what is best for the company. People learn from people.
* DON’T; immediately think that nobody knows more than you on an issue. Just because they are younger, or you’ve been in the industry longer – they may know things that you don’t, and be skilled in areas that you aren’t. Don’t get defensive on this issue.
* E.g. *“Even if somebody knows less than me in a certain area, they make up for it in other areas. I can learn a great deal in these instances, furthering my personal development and enjoying things as I do so.”*

**Do you have any questions about the company that we haven’t discussed already?**

* DO; make sure you have questions prepared. ALWAYS have questions.
* DON’T; waste this opportunity. This is your time to show them how interested you are in the company as a whole. If you don’t ask questions, you don’t seem interested.
* E.g. *“When do you plan on having this position filled?” “Where can you see this position progressing to?” “Why do you like working here?”*

**What are your pros and cons?**

* DO; list your best advantages, include your personality traits here if you think they are applicable. Support these with examples using the STAR technique if needs be.
* DON’T; say you have no cons. Nobody has no cons. Use things that you think you can improve on. Focus on something you consider to be a bit of a weakness, but state the measures you are taking to make this a strength.
* N.B. This is a perfect opportunity to present yourself as a candidate, telling them why you are the suitable candidate.